Threads of Ekatachrome
Frozen Washougal

Reflections

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Two boys stand on the frozen edge of the Washougal River, bundled in small winter coats and pulled-down boots—the kind that swallow socks and leave toes bunched and heels cold. My brother Mickey and me. The river behind us is hard and frozen in the low winter sun. The hillside trees glow with faint reddish light, the Northwest sky, a color that never appears the same way twice.

I can't quite place this location. A bend in the river near the Oak Park Bridge? Or closer to the bowling alley? Is that Goot Park across the hill? We lived in a house my grandparents bought from Goot. And yet I am unable to remember this event cleanly. Old photographs often anchor a memory that isn't entirely intact.

The slide itself comes from an earlier era of square mounts and Ektachrome—defining color once, early sixties. It has aged the way many family slides do: thinned dyes, softened edges, the surface crowded with dust, scratches, and the marks of long travel through drawers and decades. Only our faces have been lightly cleaned, just enough to let us look out through the haze.

Everything else remains—the wear, the soft dirt, the patina across the emulsion.

And maybe that's the truest part of it.

Some memories can only be seen through dust and scratches. The imperfections aren't flaws to repair, but the very texture of memory itself.